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Third Series of Extracts from Letters received by the Educational Commission for Freedmen, from Teachers and Superintendents at Port Royal and its Vicinity.

[Printed by order of the General Committee.]

BEAUFORT, S. C., JAN. 8th, 1863.

It is my opinion, formed entirely from what I have seen here during the past season, that the great body of the negroes at Port Royal would be industrious, and would labor enough to support comfortably themselves and their families, under any system of labor which should offer them a fair and reasonably certain return for their work.

The negroes here show very considerable desire to improve their mental and physical condition. We have made great effort this year to give the people convenient opportunity to *buy* the comforts of civilized life; and so far as this effort has been successful, I believe it has greatly tended to stimulate the people to exertion. The store established by the Philadelphia Society is a very important part of our machinery, for it gives the people a chance to buy a great variety of articles, of good quality, and at a fair price. Up to this time, owing to difficulty in getting transportation for its goods, the store has not been able to keep a supply equal to the demand. It is quite interesting to watch the increasing demand for the comforts of life. In view of this, I have no fear but that the negroes will be industrious whenever they can get wages for their work.

The negroes are very generally mild and gentle as towards the whites. I have seen but little disposition for revenge upon their former masters. All they ask is to be "let alone." I think there are many who would do anything rather than be made slaves again, and if the masters should ever attempt to put on them again the yoke which God has just broken, they must do it at their own peril. The fiercest and most frequent quarrels among the negroes themselves, are those caused by complications of the marriage relation. Such cases are the most difficult of any which come up for settlement, because the roots of the trouble extend so far beyond our reach. Both parties are generally in fault, and yet neither of them as much in fault as the masters, who allowed and encouraged a disregard of God's ordinance of marriage.

If all white men in the country were heartily agreed to put an end to slavery at once, I see no possible danger in immediate emancipation; for I believe that the negroes would accept the change thankfully, and be contented to forget the past. As the case stands, I think there would be comparatively little danger in immediate emancipation, if the Government should carry out such a policy both wisely and earnestly, taking advantage of every opportunity for bridging over the gulf between slavery and freedom—a gulf which all the negroes must cross before the country can again be allowed rest and prosperity.

The negroes here are, almost universally, anxious to read. They learn to read very readily, but I see no reason why they should not be as capable of learning other things as they have shown themselves of learning to read.

The negroes are very apt to learn in military matters. Both Gen. Saxton and Col. Higginson have been much gratified at the success of the 1st S. C. Volunteers. They have great confidence that when the regiment shall have been thoroughly tested, it will have proved itself as good as any regiment in the service. I heard a white man, who was on the vessel with a detachment of negro soldiers which made an expedition into Florida, and who is not disposed to exaggerate the virtues of the "nigger soldiers," as he calls them, say that the men on that occasion behaved very well under fire.

As to the success of the Port Royal enterprise, industrially considered, I would say that the cotton crop of this year is very small compared with the ordinary crop raised here. We expect now to get about 100,000 lbs. of ginned cotton. The best managed plantations, and those where the circumstances were most favorable, have raised cotton enough to much more than pay all expenses, besides raising a considerable surplus of food-crop over their own needs against the next harvest. The estimate of crops made by Mr. S., in his report of October 31, 1862, now appears to have been too large. It was made in good faith upon information furnished by the superintendents, but several unforeseen causes have since reduced the crop which the superintendents confidently expected. Much of the cotton which the superintendents were counting upon was overtaken by the frost before it came to maturity. This misfortune was probably in a great measure owing to late planting. The chief things which have interfered with complete success, as to visible results, this year, have been, lateness in commencing agricultural operations; inadequate supply of seed (cotton), implements, mules and other means of transportation at the time when most needed; the entire uncertainty as to the future, necessarily incident to a military department; depredations upon the plantations made by troops picketed upon or near them; and many other hindrances which would not exist in a well-ordered community in time of peace. The material results this year are no indication of what may be fairly expected under more favorable circumstances in the future. I think there can be no question as to the ability of the laborers in this department to support themselves, and I believe that good management would make these plantations profitable to one who should carry them on with freed laborers.

E. W. H.

ST. HELENA ISLAND, MAY 15th, 1863.

There are now in my school 37 girls and 40 boys. The first class have read Hillard's Second Reader through several times, and are looking every day for new books from the north. They propose to write to Dr. R., whose name is quite familiar to them, asking him for "harder books." Some could do it, though in rather irregular penmanship. They improve very fast in writing, and will soon be able to write letters. I very much need copy-books and pens, so they may become accustomed to using ink. I have no large children in the alphabet class now, none being over eight years old.

It has been said by some, that education makes the colored children impudent and hard to govern. It may be so in a very few cases, but I think it can hardly be called anything more than a new-found pleasure which they do not understand how to use yet. Education will make the blacks fit to be the companions of the whites, and will soon bring them to a respect of, and true politeness towards, those who have demanded their obeisance thus far. The children are very playful, and I have never tried to keep them at a distance, but rather taught them such plays as the children at the north have—so that they might give up their only amusement, the lash and wrestling. We have as nice games of ball and marbles as the northern children, and are beginning to make dolls for the girls.

The school has had a week's vacation, but resumed studies again with renewed vigor, and beg that they may not "be punished so again." The vacation is the hardship to these children.

Mr. F. and myself have an evening school, to teach writing. About twenty-five attend, most of them adults. One man, Roger Taylor, 65 years old, in one evening, learned to make eight letters and put them together into words. The school is very interesting, and many will, I am sure, learn to write this summer. Spelling is taught at the same time. You would like to see the men and women "fighting with the letters," as they say, so that they may not be "made ashamed" by their children, who are learning so fast.

E. H. F.

ST. HELENA, S. C., MAY 21, 1863.

I commenced teaching the 24th of March, 1862. I have taught fourteen months, with the exception of six weeks vacation in the summer.

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The total number of names registered is 256; number belonging now, 78; greatest number belonging at any one time, 153; average attendance for the year, 76.5; average attendance for the last three months, 66; highest number present at one time, 148; number who knew their letters at first, 0; number who know their letters now (of the present number), 69; number who could read at first, 0; number who can read now, 59. The studies are reading, spelling, writing, arithmetic and geography. The first class read in the Testament, Hillard's Second Reader, and spell from the Reader; study Eaton's Arithmetic, geography from a map, and write on slates. The second class read in Hillard's Second Reader, and spell; and in the Bible Reader, and write on slates. The third class read in Hillard's First Reader, and spell. The fourth class are learning the alphabet.

The first class need a third reader, a simple geography, a spelling-book and writing books. The second class will soon use Eaton's Arithmetic, which I have for them. The third class have Hillard's First Book, but need some other one. They can repeat nearly all the sentences in the book, from hearing the other classes, yet cannot tell the words by seeing them.

When I commenced teaching there was no regular school within six miles, so that scholars from seven plantations came, many walking four miles. In September a school was opened at the Church, which took the scholars from three of the plantations, thus reducing my number from 153 to 78.

E. H. F.

St. Helena Island, May 16th, 1863.

I have organized the district in a regular form, appointing a committee of one from each plantation. The duties of this committee will be to visit the school once a month, mark the progress of scholars, and act upon any subject that may be brought before them pertaining to the perpetuity and proper regulation of the school. Also, to see that all the children of a proper age within the district attend as fully as their labors in the field will allow. The parents of the children are much pleased with this arrangement, as it lies in the direct line of their present tendency to look after and manage their own affairs. This is one of the best indications that I have met among them, and I hope it may be readily seen by others, and promptly encouraged. It is the first real evidence that they begin to feel the responsibilities of freemen, and will do more for them than all other instrumentalities put together, in my opinion. They will be faithful to their trust, for they feel it a very great honor to be trusted. Another arrangement being made is the appointment of another committee to oversee the poor, aged and infirm. They feel it a duty to try to sustain their own poor within the district, and although all are poor, yet all who can work will cheerfully do something, and I do not think that there will be any suffering, at least for bread.

My school is quite full—more than I can do justice to. The attendance, however, is not so uniform at this season, as many have to work part of the time in the field. The capacity is good in all, except two or three. I preach to a congregation that fills the school-room every Sunday—about 150.

A. D. M.

St. Helena Island, May 25th, 1863.

I think I told you that I had organized the district by the appointment of a school committee. It is the best move that I have yet made—it works beyond my highest hopes. They visit the school every Friday afternoon, and take the deepest interest in all that is connected with its progress. They will send you their own report monthly hereafter, which I think will be pleasing and interesting.

Last Friday the committee addressed the school, and I question if an address more full of good sense was ever given on any similar occasion; and the effect upon the scholars was really marvellous.

The other movement, which I think I mentioned,—taking care of the poor and aged within the district,—also works well.

A. D. M.

Coffin's Point, St. Helena Island, S. C., May 23d, 1863.

I began each of my two schools January 5th, 1863. I have taught only Reading and Spelling, so far, and a little Writing, and a very little Arithmetic. My highest class at Pine Grove has read with me nearly through Hillard's Second Primary Reader; they stop only at the strange words, or those of three or more syllables. Some of them read very smoothly. They can nearly all write all the letters, and half of them could write a readable letter, saying what they wanted to. They bring me, of their own accord, on their slates, short sentences of their own framing, which I correct in grammar and spelling, and they profit by my corrections. My highest class at Fripp Point is nearly as far advanced. The next classes in each school have read twice through Hillard's First Primary Reader, and 40 pages in the Progressive First Reader; they have to spell very few words as they read. The lower classes are at various points in the Progressive Primer, the younger ones spelling all the words as they read, which I am glad to have them do, to secure accuracy. As they go on, they begin themselves to read all the easy words, without spelling. I have divided the schools into small classes, to make the teaching more individual. As they need careful watching less now than before, I shall soon fuse the classes together, and make time for teaching other things.

The ages range from 8 to 18 and 24. As to capacity, which is not easily measured, I should say that a little more than half of them show themselves bright, perhaps two thirds; the rest seem dull, though they will learn. How far the bright ones can go, remains to be proved. Some of them seem bright enough for almost anything, with good teaching.

W. W. H.

St. Helena Island, May 21st, 1863.

My third class (including only those who come pretty regularly), numbers 38, with an average attendance of 30 scholars. Their ages are all the way from 8 to 16; but the average is about 10 years. Only 10 or 12 knew their letters when they first came to me; and but two or three could read at all. They have been reading out of Ellsworth's Progressive Primer, for a month, and they finished to-day the 43d page. The book contains 58 pages of reading. Six or seven read without spelling, and three or four have to stand by me while I point out the letters with a pencil. The remainder read by spelling, without assistance of mine. I give them nearly two hours a day (in the morning) devoted entirely to reading and spelling. Some of them are the prettiest little things you ever saw, with solemn little faces, and eyes like stars. But this is a digression.

My second class contains now but eight in regular attendance. I have been obliged to transfer six to the first class, because their field and house work made it impossible for them to come in the morning. Their ages are about 12. They have finished all but about 10 pages of Ellsworth's First Reader, which they began about the first week in April. They read without spelling. As this class is now so much smaller than the third, I think it best to give them but one hour, while the third has two. Consequently, I have discontinued the Arithmetic and Writing. If I remember rightly, nearly all of these children knew their letters when they first came to me, though none of them could read.

My first class now come at four in the afternoon. It numbers 21, with an average attendance of about 14. The youngest is a boy of 12 years, and the oldest is a woman of 30. The average age is, I think, 15. They will read, this afternoon, Lesson V. of Ellsworth's Second Reader. They have previously read Tower's Primer twice, and Ellsworth's First Reader twice. All of them, I think, knew their letters when they first came to me, and most of them could read from a Primer, by spelling. Some four or five read now, quite fluently, out of the Second Reader, and with a pretty good delivery of the sense; but most of them still stumble a good deal over such words as "devoured, partial, although, carried, stripped, anxious, scattered," &c. In Arithmetic, they are learning the Multiplication Table, and can

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tell, from the card, the first three columns. They know, by sight, the numbers as far as 100, when I write them on the board, and show, I think, a marvellous quickness at it.

This first class of mine are real jewels. I should like to have you see them. The girls are very particular about their dress. They come in their Sunday clothes, and look as trim and as pretty as if they were not black. When the girls of the second class were first transferred to the first, they came in looking rather dingy; but when they saw how very aristocratic the others looked, they were aghast; and the next day they appeared in great style.

I am unable to discover any difference in ability, between the blacks and mulattoes; although perhaps it would be interesting to build up a theory on the subject.

Among the most desirable things in this department, at present, would be a large quantity of good Primers and First Readers, for distribution among the grown people and others who cannot come to school. They might be miscellaneous. I have given out a great many; but they have generally been of an inferior character. A quantity of *very simple* story-books, for the advanced classes, would also be of great value. They might be second-hand. Perhaps the Rollo Books might do, but I fancy they would be a little difficult. I do not want mere infant story-books. A. S.

CRANEY ISLAND, Va., March 16th, 1863.

We are daily more and more interested in our eager learners. Their strides amaze me! In writing, they run, in one day, from little *a* to their full names. I let pot-hooks go and carry them right through the alphabet. At night I set copy, give the slates to some children, hand my own pencils and paper to other children, and the morning brings no remissness to light.

Our instruction is necessarily mostly oral, as much time would be lost if we trained our pupils singly. The little things give us almost undivided attention, and are much stimulated by recitations in concert. As with other children, zeal often goes before knowledge.

Dr. Brown will soon have thirty farms under his care. My sister and I design opening, in a few weeks, a school for the children upon two of the farms. L. C.

BOSTON, JUNE 12th, 1863.

Perhaps the story of Limus may be interesting as an instance of negro capacity. He is a black *Yankee*. Without a drop of white blood in him, he has the energy and *'cuteness* and big eye for his own advantage of a born New Englander. He is not very moral or scrupulous, and the church-members will tell you "not *yet*," with a smile, if you ask whether he belongs to them. But he leads them all in enterprise, and his ambition and consequent prosperity make his example a very useful one on the plantation. Half the men on the Island fenced in gardens last autumn, behind their houses, in which they now raise vegetables for themselves and the Hilton Head markets. Limus in his half acre has quite a little farmyard besides. With poultry-houses, pig-pens and corn-houses, the array is very imposing. He has even a stable, for he made out some title to a horse, which was allowed; and then he begged a pair of wheels, and makes a cart for his work; and not to leave the luxuries behind, he next rigs up a kind of sulky and bows to the white men from his carriage. As he keeps his table in corresponding style,—for he buys more sugar of me than any other two families,—of course the establishment is rather expensive. So to provide the means, he has three permanent irons in the fire—his cotton, his Hilton-Head express, and his seine. Before the fishing season commenced, a pack of dogs for deer-hunting took the place of the net. While other families "carry" from three to six or seven acres of cotton, Limus says he must have *fourteen*. To help his wife and daughters keep this in good order, he went over to the rendezvous for refugees, and imported a family to the plantation, the man of which he hired at $8 a month. His land is in a separate field, and I let him take care of it very much like a distinct plantation. With a large boat which he owns, he usually makes weekly trips to Hilton Head, twenty miles distant, carrying passengers, produce and fish. These last he takes in an immense seine—an abandoned chattel—for the use of which he pays Government by furnishing Gen. Hunter and Staff with the finer specimens, and then has ten to twenty bushels for sale. Apparently he is either dissatisfied with this arrangement or means to extend his operations, for he asks me to bring him another seine for which I am to pay $70. I presume his savings, since "the guns fired at Bay Point"—which is the native record of the capture of the islands—amount to four or five hundred dollars. He is all ready to buy land, and I expect to see him in ten years a tolerably rich man. Limus has, it is true, but few equals on the islands, and yet there are many who follow not far behind him.

The amount of cotton raised is but a slight indication of the industry or prosperity of the people. Very few families confine themselves wholly to the plantations. Almost every one has a son, husband or father at the camps, so that currents from without keep the negro quarters constantly astir; and every old woman must have her venture of a half dozen eggs when the boat goes down. The more enterprising and intelligent naturally shoot ahead; but the *general* aspect also, despite a thousand blemishes, is that of minds awakening, ambition rising, activity circulating from one to another. The breeze of morning has come, and the night fog is moving and breaking. Obstacles and discouragements are very numerous, but they are often local, and in many other cases the remedy is in sight, though sadly out of reach. Gen. Saxton and Capt. Hooper are invaluable.

The sale of estates has been most fruitful of good results. In every case which has yet come to my knowledge, the purchasers have offered better prices for labor than the Government, and the industry, prosperity and content of the people have changed in proportion. I think on the Government plantations less will be done this year than last; on the purchased plantations, far more. The year's experience will also be useful by offering a comparison between methods of employment. Almost every proprietor seems to have adopted his own system. Some increase the Government wages for a day's work; others work in shares with their people, paying little or no wages; others keep the Government scale of prices, but distribute in addition monthly supplies proportioned to the amount of work done. A still greater advantage is that of *prompt* payment. Perhaps the chief obstacle with which the superintendents have contended, is the long delay that has throughout the year attended the Government payments. W. C. G.

BOSTON, JUNE 15th, 1862.

I have just closed my connection with Gen. Saxton's corps at Port Royal, not from lack of interest, but because I was satisfied that I could accomplish more in the same work by independent action.

The crop of 1862 has just been sent to market, being about 70,000 lbs. of ginned Sea-Island cotton. Though but a trifle in itself, it is interesting from the mere fact that it was produced by the voluntary efforts of a community of freedmen, surrounded by the influences of camps, and led to all kinds of employment outside their plantations, by catering to the wants of the United States service in many useful ways. When we look to the discouraging circumstances under which this crop was planted and grown, we can only wonder how we succeeded in getting anything from it. We were not authorized by Government to offer any definite wages for labor till after the ordinary planting season was over. We did not enter upon our work till two months after the usual time for beginning. Even after the sum of one dollar per acre was paid for planting, no further authority was given us to offer definite pay for the cultivation till after the hoeing season was over, though they were offered good wages on every side to cook for officers in camp, to load and unload vessels, build docks, handle ammunition and commissary stores, and to minister in a hundred ways to the wants of the military department. Add to this the fact that in May,

1862, when the young crops all needed attention, every man able to carry a musket was kept in camp from three to six months, and we need not have been surprised if the crops had been entirely abandoned.

Our plan of organization in agriculture is so essentially different from the ordinary method of employing rude labor, that a few words in explanation may not be out of place.

On taking possession of the Sea-Islands, we found the district entirely destitute of white men. The blacks who had been acting as foremen under the white overseers and masters, were not, as a general thing, elevated above the mass by peculiar intelligence or power of control. As soon as the artificial element of force was removed by the masters and overseers running away, these black foremen dropped back to the level from which they had been temporarily raised, and ceased to have any useful authority over the action of the masses. They continued to hold the keys of the plantation buildings, and to deal out the weekly rations of corn from the granaries left by their masters, by common consent; but whenever attempts were made by us to reinstate them in authority in the management of crops, it generally met with signal failure. They were unable to read and write, and could therefore keep no record of the amount of work done by individual laborers. I was placed on a plantation where there were over a hundred working hands, and found it quite out of the question to enforce any regularity as to working hours or the amount of work done in a day. In the absence of the material from which to make intelligent and reliable foremen, it was thought best to throw each family on its own responsibility, assigning to each a definite portion of land, and allowing them to choose their own time and manner of working it. We obliged them to look to this land for provisions, and assigned to them in addition such amounts of cotton land as they wished, paying them per acre for the planting and hoeing, and per pound for picking it. The details of the management of the crops were familiar to every laborer; and this method, though rendering it difficult to avail ourselves of improved methods of culture which might be suggested from time to time, had the advantage of inspiring the laborers with a degree of self-reliance and enterprise, the first step towards manliness, and secured us against useless and expensive experiments, into which inexperienced agriculturists are too apt to be led.

The adoption of General Order No. 12, by Gen. Saxton, Dec. 20th, 1862, put the whole department on a definite footing in regard to this matter of organization, and a reasonable crop would be the result this year, if the men had been paid promptly for their labor.

It may be of interest to you to look at a statement of the cost and products of the small district of which I had charge last summer. The result was peculiarly favorable as compared with my neighbors, partly from the fact that it was remote from camp, and that the "gang" system was earlier abandoned there than in other districts, and the lands assigned to separate families earlier in the summer. Moreover, I was allowed to keep up the interest in the crops by advancing private funds to the payment of plantation pay-rolls, and thus avoided the ruinous delays which were incurred elsewhere.

Population of District, including three plantations:

	Working hands, ...	203	
	Children under 12 years, . .	185	
	Old and disabled, ...	24	
			412
Acres under Cultivation.	Cotton, . . .	185.12	
	Corn, ...	292.02	
	Potatoes, . .	97.39	
	Fodder, . . .	40.61	
	Miscellaneous,	15.00	
			630.14

		Product.	
Expended in pay-rolls	$1,886.61		
Clothing given away.....	50.00		
Clothing given in paym't for labor,	104 63		
Provisions " " "	395 05	6,400 lbs. gin'd Cotton, at $1,	6,400
Tools and use of mules.....	350 00	226 bush. surplus Corn.....	226
Superintendence	250 00	150 bush. surplus Potatoes...	75
Total expenses,	$3,035.29	Total product,	$6,701

In conclusion, I would say that I have been agreeably surprised by the amount of enterprise and industry displayed by these people under the peculiar circumstances which have surrounded them. I have found them not only ready, but eager to enter into competition with each other in the struggle for distinction in industry, whenever and wherever reasonable incentives have been placed before them. The amount of labor required by the military department and necessarily diverted from agriculture,—the natural tendency to adopt desultory habits among a people who have just escaped from a life-long restraint, and, more than all, the conscription into the ranks of the U. S. Army, have prevented, thus far, a large force from being concentrated upon agriculture. The same causes will continue to operate in a degree for some years to come. Yet I doubt not that the stimulus of free labor will in a few years bring up the agricultural product to the former standard, and soon surpass it, when the ordinary laws of trade and the competition of private enterprise shall be relieved from the restraints of martial law and the needs of an all-absorbing war.

In regard to the ability of negroes to provide for their wants by purchase, there cannot be the slightest doubt. I have sold upon a limited district, during the past year, over $5000 worth of dry goods and provisions, household furniture and other necessaries, by which these people have been enabled to enjoy many articles of domestic comfort to which they were before strangers, and to cultivate the many wants of civilized life by means of which their industry and enterprise will be encouraged as well as rewarded.

E. S. P.

In printing another series of Extracts from letters of Teachers and Superintendents, the Committee take the occasion to call attention to the importance of the objects of the Educational Commission, and to recommend the formation of auxiliary societies in other towns and cities of New England. A renewal of the subscriptions of members of the Association, and additional contributions from those who have not heretofore aided in this important work, are earnestly solicited. The names of the officers of the Commission are as follows, viz.:

President.—His Excellency John A. Andrew.
Vice Presidents.—Rev. Jacob M. Manning, Rev. Edward E. Hale, Rev. J. W. Parker, D D., Rev. James Freeman Clarke, Hon. Jacob Sleeper, Dr. Robert W. Hooper, Prof. William B. Rogers, Rev. William Hague, D.D., Rev. Edward N. Kirk, D.D., Rev. Andrew L. Stone, D.D., Edward L. Pierce, Esq.
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Committee on Finance.—Edward Atkinson, Martin Brimmer, William Endicott, Jr., James T. Fisher, William I. Bowditch, James M. Barnard, Chas. R. Codman.

These constitute the General Committee, to any one of whom communications may be addressed, or subscriptions forwarded.

Boston, June 17, 1863.